

THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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Administrator's Notes

Melanie Barton

Every April we recognize Museum volunteers for the multitude of services they provide. National Volunteer Appreciation Week was April 15- 21 and on April 22nd we hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. The event this year had a Western theme complete with a cowboy poet, red and white checked table coverings and a delicious BBQ dinner. Held at the Gold Country fairgrounds, over 100 active volunteers and guests enjoyed a special night of recognition and thanks.

According to a recent article in the *Sacramento Bee* based on a federal report, fewer people gave time volunteering in 2006. After surging in the aftermath of 9/11, the country's rate of volunteerism took a dip after years of historic highs. According to one local volunteer, "people are too lethargic and too focused on self-interest instead of doing a little for the community and the world." While California had the country's largest number of volunteers, the state ranked 38th per capita among the 50 states.

The Placer County Museums Volunteer Program has mirrored this national trend. This makes us even more appreciative of the level of volunteer support given

to Museum programs. At the dinner we honor volunteers for their hours and the years of service. This year **Pat and Shirley Patocka** were honored for 25 years of service! They have spent countless hours as docents since the Griffith Quarry Museum opened in May 1981 and have been dedicated to sharing their considerable knowledge of Penryn history with the many visitors to the museum.

Bob and Sharon Balmain, volunteers at the Archives and Research Center, join an elite group of volunteers who have given over 3,000 hours of their time. Bob with 3,240 hours has processed and indexed over 7,000 court cases from 1851-1892, over 2000 coroner's reports from 1860-1900, and currently is indexing Placer County Hospital Registers. Sharon with 3,773 hours has developed a finding aid for the Assessor's Rolls, created a database for the Old Town Auburn Walking Tour, indexed Justice Court Records, and is currently indexing the Land Claim Books. Both Bob and Sharon have done extensive research for exhibits, *The Placer*, and requests for research from individuals.

This year two volunteers were honored for Outstanding Achievement. **Ann Fenn**, a

docent at the Placer County Museum in the historic Courthouse, shares her enthusiasm for history with every visitor who enters the museum. She skillfully interprets our history and is always well prepared for school tours. **Leona Harrington** volunteers at the Collections Management Facility. She has been involved in two large projects this year including object inventory and reorganization of accession files.

Please join Museums staff in celebrating the accomplishments of all volunteers and recognizing the special achievements of those individuals mentioned above.

We can use your help. If you are not currently an active volunteer, we need YOU. Please call Ralph Gibson at 889-6502 for details of how to get involved.♥

June 6, 1856: The Death of Public Hanging in Placer County

Carmel Barry-Schweyer

“Show me your hand!” demanded James Feeland to Greek George. Patrick Caughlin sat quietly at the table waiting for the poker game to continue. George responded, “Not until you put down more money.” Feeland replied, “I have money enough.” With that, George reached out and drew the \$8.00 on the table toward him. John Tanner stood by the bar in James McCormick’s Store in the mining camp known as Oak Grove Bar*, watching the poker game that Sunday

afternoon of October 1, 1854. Tanner and Caughlin would become witnesses to the crime that resulted in the last public hanging in Placer County.

When George seized the money on the table, Feeland jumped up and said, “I’ll see whether you or me will have that money.” He went behind the bar, grabbed a “United States Rifle,” and walked toward George. George stood up and went toward Feeland until the muzzle was three feet away, then Feeland fired. George kept going, took the rifle and threw it on the floor. George whirled around and headed out the front door as Feeland ran out the back door. The rifle, loaded with shot, not only blew a hole the size of a silver dollar in George’s chest but it also wounded Caughlin in the neck and shoulder. George died a few hours later and miners caught Feeland up the river.

Feeland, a veteran of the Mexican War, came to California from Missouri. A native of Kentucky, he was 32 at the time of the crime. When brought to Auburn for trial, Feeland insisted that it was self defense. In July of 1855 the jury found him guilty. He was to be executed by public hanging.

The following year on June 7th, the *Placer Herald* newspaper reported after a visit to the jail the morning of the execution that, “He was an illiterate man and

doubtless lead a loose, wayward life. He seems a man subdued in spirit and resigned to his fate. His eyes were red with weeping, and when we were leaving he shook hands and bid us farewell in a choked voice, immediately turning away.”

On June 6, 1856 at 11:30 AM, the Placer Rifles formed a guard around the jail. The sheriff brought Feeland out and put him in a wagon where the Drs. Hawthorne, Hubbard, and Wickes, and Rev. J.A. Brooks were already seated. The wagon, protected by the Rifles, the Sheriff and his deputies, rolled down East Street (Lincoln Way) to the Plaza to the rickety gallows in front of the American Hotel. On the gallows, he repeated to the crowd that it was self defense, the fatal cap was drawn over his head and the rope adjusted. Rev. Brooks “made a most fervent prayer and the soul of James Feeland passed into the land of the shadows.” The physicians pronounced him dead about 25 minutes after the hanging. The punishment of public hanging in Placer County died with Feeland that day.

**Oak Grove Bar was on the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River about three miles from Michigan Bluff.♣*

*We the Jury find the Prisoner
guilty, and recommend him
to the mercy of the Court
Rufus Smith
Foreman*

Jury Foreman's Verdict Note from James Feeland's Trial in July of 1855

*We the Jury find the Prisoner guilty and recommend him to the mercy of the court.
Rufus Smith
Foreman*

Last Words of Robert Scott

Robert Scott was convicted of murdering Andrew King near the Travelers Rest in 1854. These are his last words as he stood on the Gallows:

I have but a few words to say. I have had a fair and impartial trial, and I am willing to abide by the law. I have done no more than I would do again to any other man who would not give me satisfaction for what he had said. I return my thanks to John Spell, the Jailor, and Sam Astin, the Sheriff and other friends, who have been kind to me. As for the paltry mob, who have urged on my trial before I was ready, they are too mean for my curses. I have done. ♠



James Feeland Hanging from the Gallows



Museums Intelligence

Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

Our new Curator of Collections, Kasia Woroniecka, began work on April 30th. Kasia has a Masters degree in Museum Studies from John F. Kennedy University and was working at the Stanford Mansion as a tour guide before joining the Placer County Museums. Please say hello to her when you see her.

It's May, and for those of you who volunteer at the Bernhard Museum, you know May is a huge Living History month. There are 839 students are scheduled to attend Living History in May alone!

Two Community Education programs will also be held at the Bernhard Museum Complex in May and June. On Saturday, May 5th is Hands-on Archaeology. This program is comprised of several stations that will be run by participants with archaeologists looking on and answering questions.

On Saturday, June 9th is Family Living History Day. All five Living History stations will be running with the addition of farm animals. This program is always a fun one for families. If you'd like to attend, reservations are required, so please call (530) 889-6500 to reserve your spot!

The new exhibits at the Gold Country Museum are complete!

On display is a map showing the three main routes people took to get to California. There are also three large panels for each route along with a trunk. Inside each trunk is a biography of a person who traveled that route to California and artifacts that tell the story of their journey. This is a hands-on exhibit, so you can take the artifacts out of the trunks and examine them.

Also on display at the Gold Country Museum is a panel on Claude Chana. The new exhibits have given the museum a fresh look. If you haven't seen them, please make the time to visit. The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.♠

Placer County Museum Gift Shop

Looking for a great gift for Mother's Day or Father's Day? How about checking out the Placer County Museum Gift Shop! They have a great selection of books, including *They Saw the Elephant: Women in the California Gold Rush* autographed by author JoAnn Levy! They also have jewelry, artwork, and variety of items perfect for Mom or Dad!



Pat and Shirley Patocka receiving their gift for 25 Years of Volunteer Service at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



Sharon Balmain with her award for 3,500 hours and Bob Balmain with his award for 3,000 hours.



Leona Harrington with her gift for Outstanding Achievement



Ann Fenn with her gift for Outstanding Achievement

Placer County Historical Organization News



President's Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

*I do not know what we would do
in this great national emergency
were it not for the gold sent from
California. —General Ulysses S.
Grant.*

The Placer County Historical Society was among those acknowledged for help in a new book, "The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War," (Knopf, \$25) by Leonard L. Richards, a history professor at the University of Massachusetts.

It is an intriguing read, reminding us that slavery and the delivery of gold to fuel the Union cause figured in Placer County's history as well.

Among the political factions then were the Chivalry Democrats (Chivs), pro South and pro slavery; the Free Soil Party, the Know Nothings and the Whigs. One Whig, Henry A. Crabb, a Stockton lawyer who served in both the state Assembly and Senate, carried legislation that allowed slave owners to keep blacks as their property.

Crabb's measure was upheld by the state pro-South Supreme Court in a Placer County case involving a man named Perkins

who claimed three black men working for him were his fugitive property. By 1855 antislavery forces gained the upper hand in the state Legislature and the law lapsed. Crabb also tried to divide the new state in half, supposedly to allow the south to become a slave state.

Crabb eventually failed in his efforts and was rejected by the voters. In 1856 Crabb led an invasion force to establish a slave state in northern Mexico under the name of the Arizona Colonization Company, whose members included a state senator and eight former state legislators.

It was a futile, bloody loss that ended with the 59 survivors of Crabb's forces surrendering and then being executed. Crabb was the last to die. He was tied face first to a pole with his hands above him. Some 100 rounds were fired into him. His head was chopped off and put on display in a large jar of mescal.

Richards, who has authored several historical works, was raised in Berkeley and his father grew up in Grass Valley. During his research on earlier books Richards had discovered that a number of slave holders fantasized about coming to California and using their slaves to get rich. "Had they gained control of the gold, they contended, their lives and the lives of their fellow slaveholders would have been golden," wrote Richards.

He said some of the most noteworthy of free-state politicians in the mid 19th Century who sided with the south came from California and that on the eve of the Civil War the state's entire

congressional delegation had supported John C. Breckinridge, the pro-slavery candidate for President. Despite growing up and being educated through graduate school in California, it wasn't until 40-50 years later Richards learned the state's early leaders were "Northern Men with Southern principles." ♦

Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

When: June 7, 2007

Time: 6:30 P.M. Dinner, 7:30 P.M. Program

Where: Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn

Cost: \$13.00

Menu: Barbequed Ribs Dinner

Mail Check To: PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Rd., Auburn, CA 95603

Program: PCWA General Manager David Breninger and his wife Linda will give a program on the history of radio. They will share their extensive collection of historic radio broadcasts, from well known classics to lesser known programs that offer insight into the birth of mass communications in this country.

The Breninger's have collected thousands of vintage radio show recordings spanning the 1920s to the 1960s. The program will include historic commentary and interesting facts about the old-time programs, their stars and their place in history. ♥

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Myrtle Findley, (530) 346-2450
PO Box 185
Colfax, CA 95713-0185
www.colfaxhistory.org

Foresthill Divide Historical
Society
Walter Reed,
(530) 367-2430
PO Box 1175
Foresthill, CA 95631
www.foresthillhistory.org

Friends of Griffith Quarry
Doug Brown, (916) 663-2781
PO Box 10
Penryn, CA 95663-0326

Golden Drift Historical Society
Doug Ferrier, (530) 389-2617
PO Box 20
Dutch Flat, CA 95714-0020

Historical Advisory Board
Gerda Percival, (530) 889-6500
101 Maple St. Rm. 104
Auburn, CA 95603

Joss House Museum and
Chinese History Center
Charles Allen
PO Box 9126
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 878-4602

Lincoln Highway Association
Robert Dietrich, (916) 962-1428
P.O. Box 2554
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2554
www.lincolnhwy.org

Loomis Basin Historical
Society Alice Barnes, (916)
652-7844
PO Box 2195
Loomis, CA 95659-2195
www.ppgn.com

Maidu Interpretive Center
Kristie Stevens,
(916) 774-5934
1960 Johnson Ranch Drive
Roseville, CA 95661
www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum

Newcastle Portuguese Hall
Association
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113
PO Box 993, 690 Taylor Rd.
Newcastle, CA 95658

Placer County Historical
Society
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837
PO Box 5643
Auburn, CA 95604
www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Genealogical
Society
Jerry Unruh, (530) 887-2646
PO Box 7385
Auburn, CA 95604
www.pcgenes.com

Rocklin Historical Society
Carol Powell (916) 435-4604
History Museum
(916) 624-3464
PO Box 752
Rocklin, CA 95677-0752
www.rocklinhistory.org

Roseville Historical Society
(916) 773-3003
557 Lincoln St.
Roseville, CA 95678
www.rosevillehistorical.org

PCHS 07-08 Officers and Board

The following were elected as officers and board members of the Placer County Historical Society at the annual membership meeting on April 5th for the 2007-08 year:

President	Michael Otten
1 st Vice President	George Lay
2 nd Vice President	Addah Owens
Secretary	Margie Ballenger
Treasurer	Al Stoll
Past President	George Lay
Directors (two year terms):	Jean Allender, Bonnie Stokes and Walt Wilson.

Directors whose terms expire in 2008: David Ballenger, Betty Samson, Penny Watson, Karri Samson, who replaces Jane Hamilton, who resigned.

Calendar of Events

May

- May 5th, 10:00 am** Community Education Program: *Hands-on Archaeology* at the Bernhard Museum. Contact (530) 889-6500.
- May 16th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.
- May 21st, 7:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business Meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact (530) 367-2430.
- May 21st, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society Meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- May 24th, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society General Meeting in the Beecher Room at the Placer County Library. Contact (530) 887-2646.

June

- June 7th, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Cost is \$13 per person. Contact Betty Samson (530) 885-5074.
- June 9th, 9:00 am** Community Education Program: *Family Living History Day* at the Bernhard Museum. Reservations Required. Contact: (530) 889-6500.
- June 18th, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Potluck Meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact (530) 367-2430.
- June 20th, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Advisory Board Meeting in the Placer County Museum Gallery in the Gold Country Museum. Contact (530) 889-6500.
- June 20th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society Meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.
- June 23rd, 9:00 am** Indian Museum Free Day at the Maidu Interpretive Center from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Contact: (916) 774-5934.
- June 28th, 6:30 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society General Meeting in the Beecher Room at the Placer County Library. Contact (530) 887-2646.

Placer County Museums
101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603

